



**UNIVERSITY OF GÖTEBORG**

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***International Master of Science in Social Work***

**RECRUITING FOSTER CARERS – POLICIES AND PRACTICES FROM A  
SWEDISH PERSPECTIVE**

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## **Abstract**

**TITLE:** RECRUITING FOSTER CARERS – POLICIES AND PRACTICES  
FROM A SWEDISH PERSPECTIVE

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The aim of the study is to get an in-depth Knowledge about the recruitment policies and practices of foster carers and also to explore some pre-requisites of foster carers' recruitment policy from a Swedish perspective in order to make fostering attractive for modern Swedish families where both parents have a professional career. The main questions of the study have been: What is the social services recruitment policy of foster carers? What is a good foster home and how it is being determined? What would be useful to make fostering attractive for younger carers and how to find them?

The study has been selected six respondents (five social workers and one foster family) strategically from different municipalities in Gothenburg. Qualitative method has been used to conduct the study and semi-structured interview has been used to collect empirical data from the respondents.

The findings of the study show that In Sweden foster care is considered as an assignment, it is not an employment. Foster carers get a certain fee for their assignment and they also get money for the costs of the child based on their age. Foster carers are recruited by the guideline of Swedish law, the Social Services Act and the Care of Young Persons Act. According to the law foster carers can be within the Childs' network or outside the networks and it is related to the best interest of the child and to be a foster home they both have to be investigated. Foster carers are recruited via advertisement or by the existing foster carers' personal network. Social workers assess the potential foster carers by using the interview which is based on a method elaborated by Kälvesten (Kälvesten & Meldahl: 1982). According to this interview social workers try to assess their three generations information as how they are stable as a family as well as a well-functioning family. To select foster family they usually consider 'nuclear' family but recently they also recruit single parent foster family. They always try to match the both Childs' and foster families' needs to place a child.

The study also shows that to attract the younger carers need to take some steps such as: give proper information and knowledge, change of attitude about foster care, more support and help, more discussion about it in the whole society, increase authorities and politicians responsibility, treat the foster carers as part of a working team, give foster care another status to identify and with all of these to give them more money is considered also a thing in some extent. Though, the findings are not generalizable. If we want to generalize, there needs a need to conduct further and broad area coverage research on this topic. In that context this study could be a valuable source for the researchers who are interested in this field.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

Foster care is the most used intervention when children and young people cannot live with their natural parents. So foster carers constitute an important part of child welfare as performed by the social services in Swedish municipalities. Child welfare, administered by the social services in each of the 289 municipalities, is regulated by the Social Services Act of 1980 (Sol), which is a 'frame law' regarding different areas of social support, and the Care of Young Persons Act (LVU) from the same year, which regulates taking children and young people into care without the parents' or children's consent (Höjer, 2006: 1-2).

The local social welfare committee in each municipality is responsible for the placement of children in foster care. Each committee has to exercise its own judgment about what characterizes high quality foster care. The work of the committees is supervised at the national level by the National Board of Health and Welfare and at the regional level by the County Administrative Board, which links national with regional and local interests. The County Administrative Boards are not responsible for the supervision of each foster home, but should ensure that each municipality manages and organizes foster care according to existing laws and regulations.

Many municipalities have organized their foster care work in special units. In such units social workers are specifically responsible for recruitment and assessment of foster families, and also for placing children and supervising placements. In many cases social workers are also responsible for placed children's contact with birth parents. The law requires semi-annual reviews of the placement of children in foster care, regardless of whether the child is placed in foster care with or without the parents' consent (Andersson, 1999b:175). These reviews are performed by case workers from the social services in the municipalities. The law also regulates the general supervision of placements, and it is made very clear that each placement should be followed carefully by case workers.

Foster carers are usually recruited via advertisements in local newspapers, or by using active foster carer's personal network. Some families enter the fostering career on account of a prior relationship to the child. It can be a kinship relation, or another type of private network relation. Höjer (2001) found that 21 per cent of carers (n=366) became foster carers in this way. In the year of 1999, there was an amendment to the Social Services Act. This amendment stated that the option of placement in the kinship network *should* be considered in all placements. In the year of 2000 about 20 per cent of looked after children were placed in kinship homes (Socialtjänst 2003:9, cited in Höjer, 2006). All families, whether totally unknown to the child or part of the child's network, have to be assessed and duly approved by the local Child Welfare Committee.

According to a survey where 366 foster carers (174 men and 192 women) answered a questionnaire and 34 foster carers (from 17 married/cohabiting couples) were interviewed, the main characteristics of Swedish foster carers are: 81 per cent of foster

mothers and 78 per cent of foster fathers were between 35 and 54 years of age. The median age for foster mothers was 45 years and for foster fathers 48 years of age. Most of them lived in rural areas or in small villages with less than 2000 inhabitants. More than half of the respondent had nine (or less) year of compulsory school and a few number had college or university education. 65 per cent of foster mothers were gainfully employed and worked outside of home, full time or part time and 90 per cent of foster fathers were gainfully employed. 55 per cent of carers had lived together for more than 20 years. Only 1 per cent had lived together less than five years (Höjer: 2001).

Foster carers are paid for the work they do. Payment is divided into two parts. One part is remuneration for the caring work performed by the foster carers. It is based on the age of the child and is connected to the needs of the child so that carers with more demanding foster children receive a higher payment. The other part of the payment is viewed as remuneration for “board and lodging”, and is usually not taxable. The remuneration for the caring work is taxable and is also considered to be pensionable income (Höjer, 2006: 74). However, foster carers are not employed by the social services, their work is not professional rather voluntary basis; they have what can be called a *paid assignment*.

As foster carers are not employed, they do not receive any unemployment benefits, a state of affairs that places foster carers in an unfortunate and unfair position. Their assignment as foster carers can be terminated at a very short notice, which means that all payments will cease. This can be especially difficult if carers have been fostering a child with high needs, where the fostering assignment has demanded a full time fostering effort from one foster carer, who thus can find him or herself deprived of his or her only regular income. The Swedish government has acknowledged this insecure situation for foster carers and has made it an issue for further investigation (Riksdagens Revisorer: 2001, Ibid, p. 75).

Over the last decades, recruiting foster carers has proved to be increasingly difficult in most municipalities. Municipalities have used different measures and tried different types of campaigns, but without much success. At the same time as social workers are experiencing difficulties in finding suitable foster homes. This result in a worse situation for looked after children. Social workers generally try to solve the problem by placing more children in the same foster home and also the children and young people is placing in institutional care, though the foster care is better than the institutional care. Another negative effect of the recruitment difficulties is placement of children far away from their birth families because social services cannot find a local foster carer (Ibid).

The Swedish welfare state system is built on economic and gender equality but, at the same time, it is also built on work; that is to say, you need to be employed or self-employed to have the opportunity of enjoying general state support. Without a job, you run the risk of being marginalized. Therefore, it is true to say that parenthood in contemporary Sweden is viewed as a project that needs to be carefully planned in order not to risk the prospective parent's professional position. Today Sweden has the average age of first-time mothers is beginning to reach 30. The decision to become parents is greatly influenced by the long-range changes in the economy (Bäck-Wiklund: 2002).



In considering this situation, it could be said, when young couples postpone parenthood and both men and women must focus on developing their careers, “traditional” foster homes, where fostering is undertaken by housewives with no employment outside the home, will be very hard to find. Besides, the existing foster care system where fostering is not considered an employment, also will be difficult to recruit new foster carer. Many municipalities already have faced this problem. Therefore, the aim of this study is to get an in-depth knowledge about the recruitment policies and practices of foster carers and also to explore some pre-requisites of foster carers’ recruitment policy from the perspectives of Swedish professionals in order to make fostering attractive for modern Swedish families where both parents have a professional career.

### **1.1 Research questions**

To reach the main objectives the research questions of the study are:

- a. What is the Social Services’ recruitment policy of foster carers?
- b. What is a good foster home and how it is being determined?
- c. What would be useful to make fostering attractive for younger carers and how to find them?

### **1.2 Definition of Terms**

#### ***Foster care***

The term ‘Foster care’ looks at two broad and overlapping categories. Two terms, supplementary and substitute care. According to Clive Sellick (2006: 68) supplementary care is generally a short-term fostering, including respite, service for families and children to assist them in overcoming a temporary crisis often related to parental absence through illness or imprisonment or where the child has been or is likely to be harmed. Substitute care implies a longer period of alternative care including long-term foster care or adoption for children separated from parents who are either unable or unwilling to care for their children because of death, abandonment or maltreatment.

According to Colton and Williams (1997) ‘Foster care’ is care provided in the carers’ home, on a temporary or permanent basis, through the mediation of a recognized authority, by specific carers, who may be relatives or not, to a child who may or may not be officially resident with the foster carers (cited in Linda Nutt, 2006: 8).

In Sweden, foster care is not professional rather voluntary basis; it can be called a *paid assignment*. Today in Sweden, the idea of foster care as “substitute parenthood” has changed to the idea of foster care as “supplementary parenthood”. Foster carers now-a-days are expected to be a part of a working team around the foster child, together with the biological parents and professionals such as social workers and psychologists. The task of foster carers involves both caring for the foster child and helping the child to maintain relationships with biological parents and other relatives (Höjer, 2006: 71). Though, long-

term foster care is legalized. In this study the term 'Foster care' is used within this context.

### ***Recruitment***

Generally the term 'Recruitment' refers to the process of finding possible candidates for a job or function, usually undertaken by recruiters. It also may be undertaken by an employment agency or a member of staff at the business or organization looking for recruits. Advertising is commonly part of the recruiting process, and can occur through several means: through online, newspapers, using newspaper dedicated to job advertisement, through professional publication, using advertisements placed in windows, through a job center, through campus graduate recruitment programs, etc (<http://en.wikipedia.org>).

In Sweden, foster carers are usually recruited via advertisements in local newspapers, or by using active foster carer's personal network. Some families enter the fostering career that is close to the kids and within their network. All families, whether totally unknown to the child or part of the child's network, have to be assessed and duly approved by the local Child Welfare Committee. In this study the term 'Recruitment' is used within this context.

### **1.3 The structure of the grade report**

The grade report is organized with six chapters. *Chapter 1* includes introduction where describes the research problem. Then problem area and research questions, definition of important terms used in the thesis and the outline of the report are also included here.

*Chapter 2* is organized on the basis of child welfare and foster care in Sweden. It includes the Swedish child welfare policy, Child welfare legislation in Sweden, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Swedish family policy and the modern family pattern and also foster care provision in Sweden are discussed.

*Chapter 3* contains the theoretical framework/theories and earlier research. Here the Attachment theory, the Systems (family) theory and Psychodynamic/Psychosocial perspectives are described and also included the review of earlier researches.

*Chapter 4* deals with Methodology. It discusses the choice of method and the justification of method in the study, the research process, sampling/selection of data, the data collection and the analysis. In addition, validity, reliability and generalizability, ethical questions as well as limitations are discussed in this chapter.

*Chapter 5* is about the results, analysis and interpretations of the main results. It presents the results according to the different themes and mainly on the basis of the empirical data collected through interview. It also analyses and interprets the results in connection with the theory and earlier researches.

*Chapter 6* presents the discussion about the main findings in relation to the research questions. The discussion involves the relevance of the findings to the research questions and overall implications of the results. Finally, it suggests conducting further study on this topic to make generalization.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Child Welfare and Foster Care in Sweden**

This chapter includes an overview of child welfare and foster care in Sweden. It discusses the child welfare policy, legislation, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, family policy and modern family patterns etc. It also describes the foster care provision in Sweden, the policy or guideline to recruit foster carers, their assessment method, training and education respectively.

#### **2.1 Swedish child welfare policy**

In Sweden there is no special Children Act because the child welfare policy is based on the Social Services Act of 1980 (Sol) and the Care of Young Persons Act (LVU) from the same year. The policy is divided into four core activities namely: prevention, investigation, social support and in-home treatment and care (Hessele & Vinnerljung, 2000: 15). Preventive activities (primary and secondary prevention) include foster care, pre and post-natal maternal care, subsidised child care, social support in schools etc. The programmes include: agency cooperation and intra-agency service delivery, self-help groups, parent training/education and summer families.

The main emphasis in Swedish child welfare is on social support and service, rather than on child protection. As Gilbert (1997) points out, Sweden has a family services orientation rather than a child protection orientation, although mandatory reporting of suspected child abuse exists. The impression of Weightman and Weightman (1995) is the Swedish culture provides far higher levels of legitimation for state intervention than those that exist in England, even if controversy concerning compulsory intervention in families is present (Gould:1988, cited in Andersson, 2001: 237). With few exceptions parents maintain custody of their children, even if they are in long-term foster care according to the compulsory Care of Young Persons Act (Ibid, p. 238). But it is interesting to note that child welfare in Sweden never experienced any cut-backs even at the peak of economic recession.

#### **2.2 Child welfare legislation in Sweden**

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Swedish state was criticised for ignoring the hardship of orphans and children in poor and/or dysfunctional families. Debaters highlighted the need for laws that could regulate placements of children and could provide opportunities for authorities to take children into custody when their situation was unsatisfactory (Ohrlander: 1992, cited in Höjer, 2006:70). Thus, the first law concerning child welfare was designated to meet these needs and was passed in 1902. The same year another law was also passed, which regulated what means should be taken towards children and young people with criminal and/or “immoral” behaviour.

In 1924, the next Child Welfare Act of 1924 replaced the legislation of 1902 (op cit. p.33). This was the first law that gave authorities the power to take children into custody

against the will of their parents. Responsibility for administration and enforcement was given to special child welfare committees in the municipalities and not, as in other countries, to special family or youth courts (Lundström: 1993, cited in Höjer, 2006:70).

During the post-Second-World-War period the next step was taken with the passage of the Child and Young Persons Act of 1960. This law added nothing new to the Child Welfare Act of 1924. But it did emphasize the preventive part of child welfare work and it regulated the legal procedures and rules for case documentation in child welfare. The next big step was taken in 1980, when the Social Services Act was passed. Child welfare was organized under the same roof as the other social services, e.g. child care, social care for the elderly and the disabled, social assistance, and the care and treatment of alcoholics and drug addicts. The child welfare heritage from 1902 and 1924 was incorporated into supplementary legislation the Care of Young Persons Act of 1980, for children and youths up to the age of 18 (and in some cases 20) (Hessele S. et al, 1996:23).

Now-a-days there is no special child welfare law in Sweden (Andersson, 2001:237). The child welfare is included in the Social Services Act, which was passed in 1980, later amended and still in action. This is the primary law, a goal-oriented enabling act that is based on voluntary efforts and stipulates general guidelines for the municipalities concerning their social services obligations. This law has preferred foster care than residential care if out-of-home care is necessary. It is important to note that, in one amendment to the law is the requirement that consideration of the child's best interest should be particularly emphasized (in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1990).

The Social Services Act is supplemented by the Care of Young Persons Act, which regulates the circumstances under which the authorities may take children into compulsory care, if intervention is judged to be necessary and parents (or young people over 15 years of age) do not consent. A decision to take a child into compulsory care according to this Act is issued by the county administration court following an application by the municipal social welfare committee (Hessle and Vinnerljung: 1999, Ibid). Child protection and youth justice is not divided in the Swedish legislation. Up to 20 years old asocial behaviour is the concern for child welfare workers.

### **2.3 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child**

The Convention heralded a vision, a framework to ensuring the participation and protection of children. Although all the 54 articles on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) as adopted by the UN General Assembly resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989, are applicable to child welfare I will refer only those articles 1, 3(parts 1 & 3), 9(parts 1 & 3), and 12 that are directly related to my topic. The Swedish government ratified this act on 29<sup>th</sup> of June, 1990.

Article 1 state, 'For the purposes of the present Convention, a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier'.

Article 3 (1) ‘In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration’.

Article 3 (3) ‘States parties shall ensure that the institutions, services and facilities responsible for the care or protection of children shall conform with the standards established by competent authorities, particularly in the areas of safety, health, in the number and suitability of their staff, as well as competent supervision’.

Article 9 (1) ‘States parties shall ensure that a child shall not be separated from his or her parents against their will, except when competent authorities subject to judicial review determine, in accordance with applicable law and procedures, that such separation is necessary for the best interests of the child. Such determination may be necessary in a particular case such as one involving abuse or neglect of the child by the parents, or one where the parents are living separately and a decision must be made as to the child’s place of residence’.

Article 9 (3) ‘States parties shall respect the right of the child who is separated from one or both parents to maintain personal relations and direct contact with both parents on a regular basis, except if it is contrary to the child’s best interests’.

Article 12 (1) ‘States parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child’.

Article 12 (2) ‘For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law’.

So the countries that are ratified this Convention the main aim is try to focus have in child’s perspective in all matters and the best interest of the child is really highlighted. It has an impact on legislation that we found in Swedish law and also the work preference and child welfare.

## **2.4 Swedish family policy and the modern family pattern**

### **2.4.1 Swedish family policy**

The Swedish family policy is based on the principles of universality and individual rights. It therefore fits well with the socialistic-democratic welfare state policy system, originally referred to as institutional model by Titmus. Esping-Andersen (in his private-public nexus typology of 1990) took into account de-commodification (rendering service as a matter of right, and maintaining a livelihood without reliance on the market), as well as modes of social stratification or solidarity. The central concept of de-commodification

leads to a gender-biased discussion that relates to male worker. Although he was not categorical about the family, his typology is implicit on this. This is because it is within or from the broad social policy that family policy is derived and nourished. Indeed, in his revised version (1999) he adds the concept of 'familialism' versus 'de-familialisation' in which the former lean on the principle of subsidiarity while the later goes hand in hand with an almost non-existent family policy (Liljestrom et al, 2002:159).

The Swedish family policy is driven by a triad goals namely: to establish good conditions for raising children, to provide social security for families, and to uphold the principle of the equal right of men and women to participate in life and work through the provision of good childcare (Hessle & Vinnerljung, 2000: 9). They further note that although its history can be traced back to the social policy of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, modern family policy was introduced in the beginning of the 1930s at the time of deep economic recession. Because birth rates were very low, it was deemed necessary to improve conditions for families. It involved the introduction of monthly child allowances as well as generous loans to newly married couples. Therefore, although explicitly meant to improve the condition of families, the policy can be said to have had an implicit goal of improving fertility.

The Swedish family policy today especially its parental insurance system attracts international admiration. It is based on the dual-earner model. Social and medical support for both parents and children were expanded radically during the decades after the Second World War (Ibid, pp. 10-11). It is aimed at enabling both men and women to combine parenthood with employment (Ibid). In this arrangement, 'mother or father can stay at home for up to 360 days after the birth of the child with 80% compensation for loss of income. In addition of that, parents have the right to stay home from work to care for a sick child for a total of 60 days a year (for a child under 12 years of age), with a cash benefit corresponding to 80% of their income' (Ibid). Parents' employment is not affected or disrupted during these periods.

#### **2.4.2 The modern family pattern**

The modern Swedish family is characterised by dual-earner, (where both men and women are wage earners), as are most single parents. Axelsson (1992) states, at the end of the 1960s, about 70% of married mothers were housewives and about 30% in labour force. By the beginning of the 1980s, the situation was almost reversed: 20% were housewives and 80% were in the labor force (Liljestrom et al, 2002: 164). In Sweden, it is also common to have children and live together without being married. It is no surprise therefore that even divorce rates are reportedly high with 50% of children born out of wedlock (op cit. p.10). As Webner & Abrahamson (2004:1) note that, the idea of romantic love has come to dominate the relations between the couples in the family and marriage has become dependant on emotions instead of economic necessity.

Brembeck (2004:38) note that, the family relations have become more complicated, uncertain and varying – the statistics do not even capture the variability of the ever changing family forms children widely experience. As Bäck-Wiklund (2002: 169)

mentions, there are four types of families in Sweden now-a-days. They are traditional nuclear family, single or lone parents (mother-child or father-child) family, reconstituted family and cohabiting family. Even homosexual families also exist now-a-days in the society.

## **2.5 Foster care provision in Sweden**

In Sweden local municipalities (289 in all the country) are responsible to provide social services to community members (Hessle & Vinnerljung: 2000). Municipalities in Sweden have a high level of local self-government. One of the most important duties of the Social Services is to help provide children and adolescents with a safe, healthy environment to grow up in. Special attention should be paid to children who show signs of negative development.

The Swedish child welfare system has no permanency planning programme as we know it from the United States (Barth 1992) and Great Britain (Triseliotis et al. 1995). The Swedish system recommends family maintenance and there is no fixed time limit on support to families. In cases where out-of-home care is judged to be necessary, the ultimate aim is reunion (Andersson, 1999b: 175).

Legislation for the protection of children in non-parental care is rather strict in Sweden compared with other countries. Unregulated *private foster care* is illegal, even in a broad sense. For example, if a single mother wishes her child to live with the child's grandmother during the mother's convalescence after hospitalisation. The grandmother is required to notify the local authorities, agree to be investigated (including control of criminal records) and to submit to annual inspections. Failure to comply with these provisions may lead to prosecution (op cit. p.28).

## **Recruitment policy or guideline**

The law (Social Services Act) stipulates general guidelines for the municipalities concerning their social services obligations. Care outside the home must be used in moments when support does not help anymore. Usually a placement is made (with some exceptions) with the family's consent. If out-of-home care is necessary, foster care is preferable to residential care. The latest amendments of the law require seeking possibilities for the child to live together with a relative or some other closely connected adult. Furthermore the best interest of the child should be particularly emphasized (in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1990), as well as the child's own opinion should be clarified as much as possible and allowance should be made for the child's wishes, with regard to his or her age and maturity (Andersson, 2001: 237).

Foster carers are recruited by child welfare workers at the local social services agency. People can contact the agency, answer an advertisement from the agency or be contacted by a social worker who knows of the family through recommendations. As Madge (1994: 63) writes, the long tradition of fostering in Sweden can aid recruitment and be done by word of mouth, through either social workers or existing foster parents (cited in



Andersson, 2001:238). Foster carers also may be within network of the child as mentioned earlier.

### **Assessment of foster carers**

In Sweden, there are mainly two methods used for the assessment of foster carers. The oldest one has been in use for more than twenty years. The assessment process is based on a semi-structured interview, where the man and woman are interviewed separately about important aspects of their family life, their relationships to parents, partner and children. This type of interview is based on a method called 'Kälvesten' (Höjer, 2006: 74). Though many local social services have revised the original interview method, and made it more adapted to current knowledge of children and families.

The 'Kälvesten' interview is a kind of three generations information and more comprehensive and psychological in-depth model. The first generation is about their childhood, relation with parents and siblings (till now), relation between their parents and their decision making process, how was their teenage life, how they brought up, their sexual education, health status (physical and mental), habit with alcohol (when start and how about now) etc. The second generation is about their present life such as work, marriage, conjugal life (conflict and cooperation), decision making process, relation with the partner/husband, sexual life, housing, financial condition, leisure time, contact with social network (friends/relatives) etc. The third generation is about their children (how many, their age, sex and health condition), who is close to the children, how do they share their responsibility at home, their child rearing process, their feeling about parenting etc. and at last why do they want to receive a new child in their family, how about their feeling to those parents who cannot take care of their children and what about their own children's attitude on this etc. (Kälvesten & Meldahl: 1982). After the interview when the social workers interpret this information along with a psychologist they always keep in mind to consider some areas such as role models (who is the persons mentioned), family pattern (open/closed), similarity and difference in the family, expression of feelings, aggressivity, sexuality, flexibility, stability, coherence, ability to communicate and also ability to reflect of the man and woman.

The second method is called PRIDE. According to Andersson (2001) since 1994 some municipalities have begun experiments with PRIDE (Parents Resources for Information, Development and Education), a method for the recruitment and education of foster parents that has its origin in the Netherlands (there it is called STAB) and introduced in Sweden via the United States. But the respondents of this study mentioned they do not follow the PRIDE method for recruiting foster carers.

### **Training of foster carers**

Training for foster carers is mostly organised by social workers from the local social authorities. Those municipalities who have possibilities to have special units for foster care usually have a special training programme to offer their foster carers. Smaller municipalities would have fewer possibilities to organise adequate training programmes.

In some cases small municipalities join in and organise their training of foster carers as a mutual project.

According to Höjer (2006), to organise special educative days, with lectures and workshops for foster carers, is also a common measure to support and train them. Such “theme days” are often held over weekends, and also present a well deserved possibility for foster carers to relax and meet other carers. Training and study circles are mostly supplied by social workers themselves, often together with experienced foster carers. Höjer mention, social pedagogy is not explicitly use in such training.

## Chapter 3

### Theoretical Framework/Theories and Earlier Research

This chapter contains theoretical framework/theories together with earlier research that I have chosen for my findings to analysis. There are number of theories related to child care activities. However, I have tried to pick the most relevant to my topic as well as commonly used by the social services in the field of foster care in Sweden. Then I have picked some of the earlier researches relevant to my topic. Later I have analyzed and interpreted my findings according to the theories as tools/instrument and also compared with the earlier research to get another understanding about what was discovered.

#### 3.1 Theoretical framework/theories

##### 3.1.1 Attachment theory

It is now almost taken for granted that the quality of a child's early experiences in close relationships will shape development in significant ways. But this is a complex process and many ideas that has helped to make sense of the important interaction between *children's development* and *the care they receive* come from the work of John Bowlby (1969, 1973, 1980) and the framework provided by attachment theory (Schofield and Beek, 2006: 9).

John Bowlby, a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst is regarded as the father of this theory invariably an outcome of his search for, '*The making and breaking of affectional bonds*'. He drew its basic tenets from cybernetics, ethology, and information processing, developmental psychology, and psychoanalysis concepts among others. Wess (1991:66) states, three basic characteristics are associated with attachment behavior:

1. *Proximity seeking*: The child will attempt to remain within protective range of his (her) parents. The protective range is reduced in strange threatening situations.
2. *Secure base effect*: The presence of an attachment figure fosters security in the child. This results in inattention to attachment considerations and encourages confident exploration and play.
3. *Separation protest*: Threat to the continued accessibility of the attachment figure gives rise to protest and to active attempts to ward off the separation (cited in Howe, 1995: 52).

Bowlby with other researchers like James Robertson worked on the experience of children being separated from their parents. 'The mixture of tears, protest and anger observed by the researchers was both impressive and, they thought, in need of explanation' (Howe, 1995:46). Bowlby's (Bowlby, 1953:13) focus on the importance of early close relationships and separation led to a clear statement of the link between mental health and the quality of early relationships:

*What is believed to be essential for mental health is that an infant and young child should experience a warm, intimate and continuous relationship with his mother (or permanent mother substitute – one person who steadily “mothers” him) in which both find satisfaction and enjoyment (cited in Schofield and Beek, 2006: 10).*

He was particularly concerned with the impact of disruptive childhood relationships on psychological and social well-being of individuals. In his study (*Maternal Care and Mental Health*, 1951), Bowlby found that children who had been deprived of their mothers, particularly those who were brought up in institutions, suffered in terms of their emotional, intellectual, verbal, social and even physical development (Howe, 1995:47). As Bowlby put it (1951:114):

*Children are not slates from which the past can be rubbed by a duster or sponge, but human beings who carry their previous experiences with them and whose behavior in the present is profoundly affected by what has gone before (op cit.).*

This led him to a conclusion that, ‘the prolonged deprivation of a young child of maternal care may have grave and far reaching effects on his (or her) character and so on the whole of his (or her) future life (op cit.).

While Bowlby’s findings and conclusions were pioneering, it would appear that they were fallacious. As Howe (1995:47) argues, his study was on maternal *privation* (children who had *never* had maternal care and were raised in institutions) and not maternal *deprivation* (children who had had a relationship with their mother but who had then lost or been removed from her). He was also not spared by feminists. They argued that what was important for the child was not exclusive and concentrated care by one woman but stable, regular and shared care by a reliable number of adults and older children. The mother is clearly a very important member of this social environment, but fathers, grandparents and older brothers and sisters might also play a regular and significant role in that child’s experience of social relationships (Ibid, p. 48). Additionally, his theory seems to take no account of the genetically inherited traits that a child might have from biological parents which may also be important in explaining behavior in adulthood. It therefore clearly shows how psychoanalytic Bowlby was even when he claimed to criticize it and draw his thoughts from other theoretical perspectives.

Bowlby’s discourse is very important in understanding the critical importance of the mother to the child especially in its tender age. For instance the problem of ‘suitable matching’ in the areas of family placement practice would be attributed to the issue of attachment. This is because professionals would like to find a ‘model parent’, an attachment figure, through which the child’s needs would easily be met.

### **3.1.2 Systems (family) theory**

Systems ideas in social work originated in general systems theory formulated by biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy. This biological theory sees all organisms as systems, composed of subsystems and in turn part of super-systems. Payne (2005:148) argues that systems theory was an aspect of the reaction against psychodynamic theory in the 1970s. It

focuses to deal with the 'social' aspect of social work. The system theory is basically concerned with problems, relationships, structures, and interdependence of various parts of the system. The main concept in this theory is 'system' which essentially means regularly interacting yet interdependent group of items forming a whole. This theory has a comprehensive view of phenomenon. It incorporates social and psychological elements of practice.

Murray Bowen is regarded as the pioneer of family systems theory which arguably is a derivative of the general (social) systems theory. According to him, it is 'a theory of human behavior that views the family as an emotional unit and uses systems thinking to describe the complex interactions in the unit' ([www.thebowencenter.org](http://www.thebowencenter.org), 2007-04-30). Family members are connected emotionally to each other due to the nature of the family. They affect and are affected by each other through their actions, thoughts, needs, expectations and feelings and therefore become interdependent. This means a change in one person's functioning is predictably followed by reciprocal changes in the functioning of others. Families differ somewhat in the degree of interdependence, but it is always present to some degree.

Bowen, a psychiatrist, formulated this theory by using systems thinking to integrate knowledge of the human species as a product of evolution and knowledge from family research (Ibid). According to him, a core assumption is that an *emotional system* that evolved over several billion years governs human relationship systems. According to this theory, *emotional system* affects most human activity and is the principal driving force in the development of clinical problems. Knowledge of how the *emotional system* operates in one's family, work, and social systems reveals new and more effective options for solving problems in each of these areas.

According to Bowen there are eight interlocking concepts of this theory are: *Triangles*, *Differentiation of self*, *Nuclear family emotional system*, *Family projection process*, *Multigenerational transmission process*, *Emotional cutoff*, *Sibling position* and *societal emotional process* (Ibid). Among those the most relevant one is *differentiation of self* to discuss in the context of recruiting foster carers.

Families and other social groups tremendously affect on people's thinking, feeling and acting but it varies both in the case of individuals and groups. These differences between individuals and between groups reflect differences in people's levels of differentiation of self. The less developed a person's "self" the more impact others have on his functioning and the more he tries to control, actively or passively, the functioning of others. The basic building blocks of a "self" are inborn, but an individual's family relationships during childhood and adolescence primarily determined how much "self" he/she develops. Once established, the level of "self" rarely changes unless a person makes a structured and long-term effort to change it ([www.thebowencenter.org](http://www.thebowencenter.org), 2007-04-30).

It is therefore applicable this theory in the context of recruiting foster carers where the professionals consider different family systems as well as the systems concept as a whole.

### 3.1.3 Psychodynamic and Psychosocial perspectives

Psychodynamic perspectives are based on the work of Freud and his followers, and developments of their work. They are called 'psychodynamic' because the theory underlying them assumes that behavior comes from movements and interactions in people's minds. The theories use various techniques to interpret how people's minds are working by observing their behavior. Psychodynamic theory emphasizes the way in which the mind stimulates behavior, and both mind and behavior influence and are influenced by the person's social environment (Payne, 2005:73).

Psychosocial matters define most that is of interest to social work, particularly people who are having problems with others (parents, partners, children, peers and professionals) or other people who are having a problem with them. There is a simultaneous interest in both the individual and the qualities of their social environment.

The basic dynamic between psychology and setting can be used to explore all aspects of people's psychosocial functioning. The developmental frameworks that help to analyze social behavior and the quality of people's past and present relationships provide social workers with a powerful theory to guide all aspects of practice, including observation, assessment, evaluation of risk, decision-making, the choice of methods of help and treatment, worker reflectivity and models of practitioner supervision (David Howe, cited in Adams R. et al 1998: 173-4).

Florence Hollis (1977:1308), an important writer in this field, summarizes the main elements of the psychosocial approach as follows:

*It is . . . an attempt to mobilize the strengths of the personality and the resources of the environment at strategic points to improve the opportunities available to the individual and to develop more effective personal and interpersonal functioning* (cited in Trevithick P., 2005: 272).

This definition stresses the importance of both internal and external factors in relation to people's capacity to cope with the everyday stresses of modern living. As such, it contradicts the myth that psychosocial approaches are only concerned with people's inner, emotional life: the external world is also an important area of analysis and concern.

Brearley (1991: 50-5) says, there are some key concepts that differentiates psychoanalytic perspectives from other schools of thought. Which are: the unconscious, the defences (or defence mechanism, resistance, repression, regression, splitting, transference and countertransference (Ibid, pp. 272-3).

#### *The unconscious*

Central to the concepts of transference and resistance is the notion of the unconscious that is 'mental processes of which the subject is not aware' (Rycroft, 1968:172, Ibid).

### *Defence mechanism*

Defences are strategies which a person employs either knowingly or unknowingly, in order to avoid facing aspects of the self which are felt to be threatening (Jacobs, 1999:98, Ibid).

### *Transference and countertransference*

One specific relationship component of interest in the psychosocial tradition is that of transference and countertransference (Turner, 1974: 90). Transference is a description of the way that people transfer 'past emotions to the present situation. Hence, understanding what is happening in the relationship between the workers and . . . client is of the utmost importance. Transference may not only distort the therapeutic relationship, but it may also cause the client to confuse other relationships as older feelings are transferred to new, unconnected situations. . . . Transference is said to be taking place when there is a repetition of the past which is inappropriate to the present. To the extent that a person continues to react to the new relationship as if it was an old experience, he is dealing with the real situation inappropriately, (Howe, 1987:75-6, Ibid).

Transference occurs in every human relationship in that it involves passing on or 'transferring' an emotion or pattern of relating from one person to another person or object. Feelings of mistrust, dislike, love and care can be in response to the practitioner's particular qualities but can also be a reflection of earlier feelings, fears and anxieties being activated. In this situation, it is important not to collude or to allow ourselves to be manipulated by these positive and negative feelings, but instead to help the individual to understand what these feelings represent and what we have become for them. So this is one of the main important areas of concern for the family placement social workers.

## **3.2 Earlier research**

The study attempts to discuss and analyze the Swedish recruitment policies and practices of foster carers and also to find out some pre-requisites in relation to the modern family policy to make fostering attractive for the younger carers. But there is not a single study specifically on this topic in Sweden. As Andersson (2001) states, in Sweden, the foster care research focus is generally placed on the children, not on the parents who perform the foster care. In considering this situation I have picked some of the earlier researches/literatures, those are more relevant to my topic.

Höjer I. (2006) made an attempt to give an overall picture about foster care in Sweden. At first the author gives an overview of foster care in Sweden. Then the author mentions the statistics of children and young people in foster care, characteristics of their parents, characteristics of foster carers, their assessment methods, kinship placement, financial support, and research about foster care in Sweden etc. With all of this she emphasizes on the shortage of foster families are the most important issues in contemporary Swedish foster care, it will be very hard to find potential foster home in future due to changing family and work pattern. She suggests that social services will have to find ways to make fostering attractive for modern Swedish families where both parents have a professional career. The author also mentions one study findings and its recommendations on foster

care conducted by the Parliament Auditors (Riksdagens Revisorer: 2001). This study found there are various problems of foster placements and also with children who are placed in foster care and they came to the conclusion that the problems faced by foster care due to insufficient interest shown by the government for this specific form of care. Their recommendation was the state should take the initiative to formulate a national strategy for foster care. They also suggest that work as a foster carer should be made more similar to “regular” employment on the labour market. Foster carers should have the same benefits and the same rights as other employees and to enhance public knowledge of fostering and thus to make the general perception of work as a foster carer more positive. At last Höjer suggests that to make fostering a well supported, highly appreciated assignment might be the most efficient way to recruit new foster homes and payment maybe of little importance compared with other motivations to foster.

Regner, M. & Johansson, L. (2006) write an article based on some important results from a qualitative study. The study is conducted basically on the notions of the family. It focuses on the notions of “good parenthood” and its’ impact of Swedish contact family service (according to the respondents views) that is provided to help mostly single mothers to get relief from constant care-giving one or two weekends a month. In the study three parties have been interviewed (a total of 54 interviews): client families, contact families and social workers that handled the cases. According to the main findings the writers conclude if the contact family service would be consider as a support service for lone parents there needs a need for further consideration on the family ideals.

Andersson G. (2001) conducted a study on 21 foster families about their motives for becoming foster parents, which were linked to their family and work circumstances. The researcher found four different but equally frequent reasons or motives for taking care of foster children. They are: relatives who feel responsibility for a certain child; couples who want children and do not think they can have children of their own; families where the mother wants to be at home taking care of biological as well as foster children instead of having unskilled employed work outside the home; and parents with grown-up children who want to fill the ‘empty nest’ by becoming foster parents – combined with a family business at home or close to home. Changing family and work patterns in Sweden do not seem to have influenced foster families as much as families in general. The researcher also mention according to her knowledge about other research foster parents usually point out two sorts of motives for taking care of foster children, that is unconscious and conscious motives or inner and outer motives, psychological as well as socio-economical.

Triseliotis, J. et al (2000) discuss in their book ‘Delivering Foster Care’ about the changing nature of fostering from the perspectives of foster carers and local authority fostering agencies. It is based on a comprehensive study in two parts which took place in all 32 Scottish local authorities and one voluntary organization between 1996 and 1998. It was prompted mainly by concerns about the perceived inadequate supply of foster carers and issues of recruitment and retention. The authors set out to examine the characteristics, motives and social circumstances of active and former foster carers; seek explanation for why some carers leave the service; describe the experience of fostering,



including contact issues between parents and children; consider the impact of fostering on carers' families and evaluate post-placement support and general experiences of the fostering service. It also identifies the policies, structures and organization of local authorities with respect to fostering needs, recruitment approaches, the preparation, assessment and training of carers, post-placement support to children and carers, the assessment of children and the matching processes followed, as well as the financial arrangements and monitoring mechanisms in place. I think this is a key source for the professionals to improve in many areas of foster care.

Sinclair, I. et al (2004) describe in their book 'Foster Carers -- why they stay and why they leave' foster carers look after two-thirds of the children cared for by English local authorities at any one time. So the recruitment and retention of these carers is one of these authorities' central concerns. This book is written at a time of concern about the shortage of foster carers, a growing acknowledgement of the complexity of the task and recognition that if the authority wants to recruit and keep foster carers in sufficient numbers then effort must be put into these both nationally and locally. To do this successfully, the authors conducted a study on thousands of foster carers across seven different local authorities. They highlighted the importance of providing support that is adapted to the carers' families, contains the basic elements of reasonable payment, relevant training and reliable social work support, responds sensitively to serious crises and treats carers as part of a team and meets the specific needs of carers such as carers' groups and relief breaks. So this is an invaluable resource for policy makers and practitioners in the field of foster care.

### **3.3 Summary and reflections**

The above mentioned theories have some core ideas. In attachment theory close relationships in early childhood is important. It affects children's ability to develop trustful relations and to interact with other people. It much focuses on relationship between mother and child. The core idea of systems theory is individual actions, beliefs and attitudes need to be understood as part of the total system of family relationships. According to psychodynamic perspectives children's unmet needs in early childhood have long-lasting effects. Feelings derived from early relationships are often transferred or projected onto later relationships. On the other hand the earlier researches on foster care related to the foster homes describe some problems exists in this field, especially recruitment and retention of foster carers. In Sweden those problems are mostly related to the lack of sufficient attention by the state, lack of public knowledge and appreciation, lack of enough support and in this context payment also a thing. It is also observed in the context of foster care in the United Kingdom. Andersson's article identifies four motives of foster carers and those are not influenced by the changing family and work patterns and Regner, M. & Johansson, L.'s article that based on contact family service identifies and concludes about the further consideration of family ideals in this regard.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Methodology**

Using appropriate method is the main criteria of a good study. Without appropriate method a study cannot investigate representative findings. Every study needs one or more methods on the basis of its type. Depending on the topic, objectives and availability of data the methods are chosen for a study. There are two main approaches to conduct a research, using qualitative or quantitative methods. While quantitative research relies on measurement and precision, using statistical analysis and testing hypothesis and theories; qualitative research tries to characterize certain circumstances, using verbal analysis and formulating hypothesis and theories.

#### **4.1 The choice of method**

The present study is explorative of nature as it aimed to get an in-depth understanding about foster carers recruitment policies and practices and to explore some pre-requisites of foster carers' recruitment policy for recruiting new/younger carers from the perspectives of Swedish professionals. According to Padgett (1998) qualitative research methods are usually very fruitful for exploring a topic and a desire for an in-depth understanding about which little is known. Though it has some limitations such as: it cannot generalize the findings and not capable to test the results.

As Kvale (1996:14) argue, “the qualitative research interview is a construction site for knowledge. An interview is literally an *inter view*, an inter-change of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest”. Considering the limitations of this method I have chosen qualitative interviewing, as the aim of the study is to gain in-depth knowledge about how the social workers perceive about the recruitment policy and how they practice it for recruiting foster carers. In addition of that, this study tried to explore in according to their views what could be attractive for recruiting younger carers for fostering. For the purpose of the study semi-structured interviews is conducted in order to adapt the respondents level of understanding thereby generating new findings. To strengthen the validity of the knowledge gained, semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to probe in order to get more information and also to prevent misunderstanding.

This study has used ‘inductive’ approaches (Gilbert, 2001: 22), because it has tried to get in-depth understanding about recruitment policies and practices of foster carers and also to explore some themes for better implementation of foster care as an intervention method of child welfare, which are found from the views of the Swedish professionals.

#### **4.2 The research procedure**

#### 4.2.1 Literature/earlier research

The first and most important step in order to pursue the research was literature review through to conduct various electronic searches to ensure that as much information as possible about the research topic is obtained. This has done in order to gain specialized knowledge to broaden my understanding of the topic of research and to prevent the reproduction of a study that's already been done.

#### 4.2.2 Sampling/selection of data

According to Gilbert (1996:19) theories should be founded on data that is valuable in understanding the social world therefore defining the population of the study is essential in order to gain a thorough understanding of the topic.

The present study is conducted on foster care by the Social Services of different municipalities in Gothenburg city in Sweden. There are 21 municipalities in Gothenburg ([www.goteborg.se](http://www.goteborg.se), 2007-01-23). In these 21 municipalities only seven units are working on foster care and among these seven units four the Northern part of Gothenburg (Bergsjön, Kortedala, Lärjedalen and Gunnared) are working separately and they are responsible for advertisement, recruitment and training of foster carers by themselves. The other three (Majorna, Biskopsgården and Tynnered) are the biggest foster care units working in association with one project called 'Child Care Project'. The child care project is providing central services to those three units and they are delivering services in 17 units. All the foster care social workers who are working in those units would be considered as population of this study.

Majorna is the central part of Gothenburg rendering services in the Centrum, Härlanda, Linnestaden, Majorna and Örgryte. Tynnered is the western part that rendering services in Frölunda, Askim, Högsbo, Styrso, Älvsborg and Tynnered. Biskopsgården is on the island of Hisingen that delivering services in Backa, Lundby, Biskopsgården, Kärra-Rödbo, Torslanda and Tuve-Säve. The 'Child Care Project' is responsible for advertisement and the general recruitment of foster carers in common. One social worker is exclusively working in this field and responsible to provide foster families to the three units after getting their names and preliminary information. Then the social workers of foster care team in these three units continue the thorough investigation and select them. I interviewed two (02) social workers from two units out of the biggest three units, one (01) social worker from the child care project and two (02) social workers from two units out of those four separately working units. I also interviewed one foster family for illustrating the empirical context. It is not possible to draw a conclusion on the topic by the perspectives of foster carers rather it provides the result from the perspectives of them as well.

To get information on my topic I interviewed six respondents (five social workers and one foster family). It's a *strategic sampling* method has been use for selecting the respondents. I had intention to cover the seven units and also to interview more foster families but it was too tough for me to find out English speaking social worker as well as

foster family. I got in touch with them by different ways. At first I sent e-mail to all of the heads of foster care units in social services and my supervisor also sent e-mail to them several times. But I did not get any reply from them. Then my supervisor gave me one social worker's e-mail address and I got the child care project social worker's and also the foster family's address and phone number by contacting with that social worker. I also got some addresses and phone numbers from another social worker when I was doing my field practice at Bergsjön. Then I contacted with all of them and request them to participate in the study via e-mail informing my title and purpose of the study. Some of them (not all) replied and I again sent e-mail to seek an appointment for interviewing and they gave me the time. Almost all (except one) I could contact with them in this way. I introduced with one social worker (then my respondent) when I was working on a project paper of theoretical framework course in this Masters programme.

All of my interviewed professionals had three and half year's bachelor degree in social work and two of them, one had masters and other had international masters of social work. Some of them had different types of training like family therapy. One social worker had experience as foster parent. Most of them had other work experience as social worker especially with families and children and the duration of experience is between one and thirty years. Their work experience as foster care social worker had between four and ten years. They had 25 to 30 children placed in foster homes for which they are responsible. Only one had 9 children due to the parental leave. The foster family had three and half years experience as foster parent and they had one foster child, but they did not have their own child together. Their age was 42 and 48 years respectively. They both took initiative together for fostering and both had responsibility to take care of the child. They were educated and both had full-time job.

#### **4.2.3 The data collection**

Considering the purpose of the study the qualitative interview technique was chosen for data collection. I have prepared two separate semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix, A-B) with more or less identical questions for interviewing social workers and foster family. It is constructed from the beginning with some background questions and then includes the main questions considering the research questions of the study. After conducting the first interview I brought some changes in the interview guide considering some raised new themes during interviewing.

All interviews were conducted in April 2007. I, myself have conducted all the interviews according to the prepared interview guide. The entire social workers interview took place at their office room and it was very positive for interviewing due to noiseless environment. But the foster family's interview took place at their home, though it was not totally noise free due to their younger foster son. I did my interview in that environment, because I had not any other option. During the interview I tried to maintain interview ethics. All the respondents used English (except some terms in Swedish and most of them they explained for me) during dialogue. The interviews lasted between 60 and 90 minutes.

All the respondents were asked if they would like to have the transcribed interview text. They were also asked about the possibility to contact them if any difficulties face to get clear meaning of their statement during transcribing the interviews. Four of them had a wish to get their interview transcription but all of them agreed to contact with them if any additional questions would arise.

#### **4.2.4 The analysis**

As Kvale mentioned (1996:190) five methods of analyzing interviews such as meaning condensation, meaning categorization, narrative structuring, meaning interpretation and ad-hoc method for generating meaning. Analysis is not an isolated step, but rather part of a process (Kvale: 1996). The starting point of that procedure is in the interview where the subjects describe their construction of the world and talk about their spontaneous ideas about a topic. The next steps are transcribing, reading the transcribed texts and identifying meaning (meaning condensation), identifying key themes or ideas with coding, organizing the key themes under different categories with labels (names) and if necessary, classifying the categories into different sub-categories. Though, level and type of coding depend on the size of the project and the researcher's own way of working. The final step is interpretation, though it starts from the beginning point of the interview stage.

In this study, I have recorded all the interviews by a tape recorder. On completion of interviewing I transcribed all of the interviews word by word as far as possible. Then I read one transcribed text first (as I am new to qualitative analysis) again and again in order to identifying meaning (meaning condensation) and also identifying key themes related to the research questions. In order to get similar ideas I read all the transcribed texts in the same way. Then I summarized the interview texts by using meaning condensation method whereby long statements compressed into briefer statements in which the main sense of what is said is rephrased in a few words (Kvale, 1996:192). When analyzing I examined how respondents defined themes presented to them during interviews. The transcribed data then compared and put into categories in order to derive meaning from information obtained during the interviews. Finally, I have used my theoretical framework and earlier research for interpreting and discussing the themes and tried to relate those with the research questions of the study.

#### **4.3 Validity, reliability and generalizability**

**Validity** is related to the measurement of right concepts. According to Gilbert (2001: 126) validity is about whether the right concept is measured. Also validity refers to the truth-value of a research project (Seale, 2004: 72). On the other hand, **Reliability** is related to the consistency of the research findings. According to Gilbert (2001: 126) reliability is about whether a measure works in a consistent way. Reliability also concerns the consistency with which research procedures deliver their results whether or not these are true (Seale, 2004: 72). So reliability is related to random error and validity is connected to systematic error. But both are linked with each other. Reliability is necessary condition of validity.

Validity and reliability cannot be ensured in a single stage of a research, it is necessary to ensure the validity and reliability throughout the research process. It starts at the thematizing stage and ends after the reporting. As Kvale (1996: 237) states, it is necessary to ensure validity and reliability in all seven stages (thematizing, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analyzing, validating and reporting) of a research. Validity depends on following different things: to choose an appropriate research area, appropriateness of measurement techniques for research area and research questions, using triangulation (data triangulation-time, space and person; investigator triangulation; theory triangulation and methodological triangulation-within method and between method), sample size and sampling techniques, types of data and techniques of data collection, respondents, analysis and interpretation, interviewer, interviewee and observers, bias (in sampling, data collection, coding and analysis), drop-out, manageability of the problem area etc. On the other hand, Reliability depends mainly on conducting the study twice (to repeat) with same methods and same population. Besides, it depends on some other basic things such as bias and neutrality, sampling, appropriate methods, triangulation, questions' type (leading etc.), skills and honesty of interviewer, respondents' answering type, transcribing, analysis and interpretation of data etc.

It is very difficult to ensure validity in the qualitative research. In this research for ensuring validity I have tried to measure the right concept by the right instrument. I think the problem area that I have chosen is significant. I tried to use data and theory triangulation. I also tried to maintain objectivity during analysis the data. So all of the above efforts I have tried to increase the validity of the research. But I think I could not maintain the appropriate procedure to select my sample due to the practical situation. It is also difficult to ensure reliability in qualitative research because it mainly demands the same result from a same study again and again, which is really difficult in social science. However, I have tried to maintain appropriate procedure in this study.

**Generalizability** demands on the basis of the findings of a sample study, the researcher can predict about the whole population. But it should conduct on a representative sample of that population. As Kvale (1996: 232) states, there are three types of generalizability: naturalistic, statistical and analytical. For generalization representative sample size, random sampling, statistical tests etc. are necessary. The present study conducted on a small sample that is not representative. It also did not use random sampling technique but use purposive sampling and it is not capable to use statistical test at all. So it is not capable to generalize the findings.

#### **4.4 Ethical questions**

Ethical decisions do not belong to a separate stage of interview investigations, but arise throughout the entire research process. A researcher should follow the ethical guidelines in all the seven stages (cited earlier) of the research (Kvale, 1996:110).

In conducting this study, I have tried to take the principles of informed consent, confidentiality and consequences are of primary consideration. At first when I contacted

to the respondents I sent a brief description about the aim of my study including title. In addition of that, at the beginning of the interview before signing a contract of informed consent, I again informed the respondents about the purpose as well as of possible benefits of the study. I assured them about the confidentiality of data and informed during analyzing some data may be changed so that no interviewee will be recognized. I recorded their interview with prior permission. It also included in my informed consent form (see Appendix-C) that provided to all of the respondents. I also assured that the findings would not harm them any way. I provided the transcribed interview texts most of them (who agreed to take it) in order to read, approve and verify information to be used in the analysis and reporting of the data and they sent it back to me with comments. I have used the last version of the transcribed interview texts in my report.

#### **4.5 Limitations**

I think every research work have some limitations, especially in the methodological consideration. The first limitation of this study is the selection procedure of sample. In Sweden it was very tough for me to find out English speaking social worker as well as foster family. That's why all of my respondents (except one) are provided by other social workers who known to them as English speaking person. So they may be provided those who are competent enough and in this regard, their selection may be biased. The sample size was also small and I interviewed only one foster family, which cannot be representative for the whole population. So the result cannot be generalized. Not only that due to the language barrier, because I conducted all of my interviews in English but it was not the mother tongue either of the respondents or me. So, sometimes it made difficulties to get the actual views of the respondents due to their different accent. Another problem that I have faced to conduct this study is some of the literature on this topic in Swedish language. So it was not possible for me to use of those sources in my degree report. I have used only different English sources and few Swedish language sources from other English sources.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Results**

This chapter attempts to present the results of the study in accordance with the main themes following the research questions and explore from the respondents' views and also analyze and interpret the findings in relation to the theoretical framework and earlier research, as discussed in the theoretical framework/earlier research (chapter 3) of this report. There are three main themes (including different categories) of this study presented in this chapter and also analyzed and interpreted respectively. During the discussion of the interviewees' views, I have used the word 'Respondent' for all the interviewees (either male or female).

#### **5.1 Recruitment policy and method**

##### **5.1.1 Foster care is an assignment**

In Sweden foster care is not an employment, so they do not have any employer. They do not have all the beneficiaries as an employment includes such as leave, unemployment benefit and so on. So it is an assignment. Some people have this assignment on full time basis but still it is not an employment. One social worker says in this context:

This is not a job. You have a contract obviously. So they contract it, maybe you call it they have an assignment maybe it is a good word to describe it.

They get payment in two ways. It is one part of the payment a certain fee (like salary) for their assignment in every month and they have to pay tax and get pension also for this. But they do not get the certain kind of pension as an employed person; it is a different type of pension. The other part of the payment is the costs for the child such as foods; cloths etc. It is based on the age of the child, but if the child needs more care and more time and if they have other special needs then it is increased. This money is not taxable. The interviewed foster family says, they get three different kinds of financial support. One is for the assignment, the other one is for the costs of the child and third one is for their lost income, because they take care of a youngest child and it needs a lot of time. So they both took leave from their job full time at first for six months one by one and now the foster mother has taken part time. So social services are compensating their lost income. But the money did not cover the amount of their lost income, because social services have a ceiling they cannot give higher than that. The foster family's income was much more than that ceiling. One interviewed social worker comments on this:

We often discuss this issue at this place that we always have had a ceiling of salary that we could pay the foster family but next year it will be taken away. Because we have now more families who are both working with academic jobs and they are earning more money.

The foster family also says they do not consider the money they get that it is enough or not because they do it as their own child, they do it for themselves but they also say it is a



twenty-four hours job and if somebody calculate how much time and energy it takes in comparison of money then it is very little.

### **5.1.2 Policy and guideline to recruit foster carers**

Foster carers' recruitment does not have any specific policy but it is guided by the Social Services Act. The law says they need to recruit someone that is close to the child and within their network that they could find them and that is the guideline. So they do a lot of network placements but if there is nobody to take care of a child within the network then they have to get another foster home and in that case the guideline is that to get a foster home within 10 to 12 Swedish miles from Gothenburg. Though, in some special cases they need to find a home as far away as possible. Another thing is the law says that the families have to be thoroughly investigated (including network families) and they have to suit the needs of the child and the best interest of the child should be particularly emphasized.

### **5.1.3 Advertisement and recruitment**

In considering the different nature of working area (mentioned in the methodology) the respondents' replies in different ways about this question. The respondent from the child care project who is responsible for advertisement and the recruitment of foster carers in common (including two respondents who were selected from the two units in the biggest foster care units) says they advertise very much in the daily news papers, different media Television, Radio and tried to make this need visible to the people. They have cooperation project with commercial TR agency and they try in different ways on buses and trams and bus stops to put big posters for this. They also use mouth to mouth method: through prevailing foster homes they spread information to their friends and in that way they get many of them. Then the child care project social worker get answers from many people who are interested and then they have first draft, the first talk with them and they get the names and some little information and then they send the family to one of the units in the biggest foster care units. Then they start the thorough investigation of the family.

The two respondents selected from the two separately working units say, they also advertise in the newspapers or in magazines and in the union magazines which is a good place to put ads, advertise in the local papers and sometimes in local papers outside of Gothenburg because there are more families that are possible foster families. They also put ads in local Radio station. Besides, they have an agreement with all the units in North-East part of Gothenburg it is Bergsjön, Kortedala, Lärjedalen and Gunnared and they do together with ads and things. They also recruit foster family by the existing foster families. When the families contact with the social worker they ask their name and their family what looks like some basic information and if it sounds like it could be an interesting family then the social workers start the thorough investigation.

#### **5.1.4 Assessment method of foster carers**

The four respondents who directly related to the assessment of foster family say when they have the name with some information then they keep in touch with them and usually social workers meet them for the first time often at their office or the family's home. At the first meeting they try to give information about what the foster family could be work, what they do, how they work and how this system is built the more general information and then if they afterwards are ready to continue then they meet them second time. In the second time they usually meet the whole family (including children) and they meet at their home and ask them more questions about their family matters but still more over general part and it is a little bit more of a dialogue compare with the first time. And then the third times they have their in-depth interview. Before the interview they have the formal checks of the police, the social register, financial authorities (if they have any tax matters) etc. The social workers bring the paper when they visit them and if the family says they are interested then they sign the paper.

After completion all of those formalities they have their interview. This interview is very well-structured, deep and long interview based on Kälvesten (Kälvesten & Meldahl: 1982). But most of them comments all the foster care units have the base of Kälvesten but they have tried to develop their own structure according to Kälvesten. They do this interview separately one with the man and one with the woman and they try to cover different areas and it is about three generations' information, their childhood, their present life and their children. They try to find out about their own background, their upbringing, how their relation was with their parents, siblings and then their education and then about their present life which is the main one, about work, education, how the family situation which is quite essential how is their relation with their partner, sexual relation, their financial status and how is their relation with they hold downs either family and lot about the children, what do think is important to main the upbringing of children, what values do they want to pick to them etc. And then also that part about a little bit of looking for what the power they would like to see in children, what is important regarding their children and also a little bit about attitudes why do they want to be foster parent, why do they think children need to come to foster homes and what their experience to meet with people with drug problems and how is their relation with relatives etc.

One respondent says, they have an additional interview when they interview network families who already have known about the child. Recently they have started to interview grown up children separately in a family and that is also part of the investigation of the family. Another one says they use special questions for single parents, special questions for immigrants or the network parents but the Kälvesten method is most common they use in Sweden.

After this interview they usually sit together with some colleagues and a psychologist (though all units do not have psychologist but most of the social workers have education/special training about Kälvesten interview) and go through this interview and evaluate and interpret this what it looks like. So it takes some hours usually two-three

hours and then they get the summary and then some may be raise questions about the family, they need some clarification and then they go back to the family and ask them. So that is the end of assessment but then before they can receive a child they have to go through the training. The foster family's statement in this context:

The social workers met with us different times. At first it was at our home and they met both of us. At the same time they also did check up of our different registers and then afterwards they interviewed us separately, two different persons one interviewed him and one interviewed me (the foster mother) and asked questions about the background, what kind of experiences we had in the childhood, family life, family situation, what is family ties, how you look-up family and so on. The same questions and compared our answers that to see how stable our relationship and a family, I guess (the foster father). They also visited our home two times before that.

They say they do not follow the PRIDE method for assessing the foster family and they do not think that any foster care units follow this method here in Gothenburg.

### **5.1.5 Evaluation of method**

The four social workers (who interview the foster family) say the interview is based on the old Kälvesten but it has been revised many times. They do not evaluate it formally any time but through their experience and also from the other parts of the country adding some important things (in the content of interview) which they have included in their interviews. One social worker says:

I think though the basic is from the Kälvesten but it is different in different places, it is not the same. The vital parts are the same but the information about the different areas, they are different.

### **Analysis and Interpretation (Theme 5.1)**

The study attempted to find out the Swedish recruitment policy and practices of foster carers. It identifies that when the social workers assess the foster family by the interview based on Kälvesten interview method they try to find out their three generations information such as their childhood, their present life and about their children as it would be fruitful to taking care of a children. It is mostly related to the psychodynamic perspectives. As Howe (1998) states, "The basic dynamic between psychology and setting can be used to explore all aspects of people's psychosocial functioning. The developmental frameworks that help to analyze social behavior and the quality of people's past and present relationships provide social workers with a powerful theory to guide all aspects of practice, including observation, assessment, evaluation of risk, decision-making, the choice of methods of help and treatment, worker reflectivity and models of practitioner supervision" (cited in Adams R. et al, 1998: 173-4).

It can also be analyzed by the attachment theory according to Bowlby (*maternal privation*) as they try to understand the foster families early childhood relationship with their parents differently, how their attachment with whom (mother and father), how was their feelings about that and so on. Besides, after completion of interview they try to

interpret that information with the help of a psychologist. I think it is a reflection of practicing those theories during the assessment of foster family.

In addition of that, the systems theory is the main basis of their working. They try to practice foster care according to systems specifically family systems theory as well as general systems theory. I think foster care itself a system, because it has different sub-system such as foster family has a system, biological family has a system and child is a part of these two and also there are two groups of social workers, one groups responsible for the recruitment, assessment and placement of child and they are mostly involved with foster family and other groups responsible for investigation about child, their family and also to make decision which child needs to place foster homes and so on. All these are interdependent; if any sub-system does not work properly the whole system (foster care) cannot be work effectively.

## **5.2 Characteristics of good foster home**

### **5.2.1 Good foster home**

All interviewed social workers perceive that it's really hard because sometimes they think about one family is really good but they could be very different. Though, they think good foster family has some traits in common that, it is a family, it has to be very stable relationship between husband and wife, they must have mental and physical space, additional space for a child, the mental part is the most important ones. They also told a family who is open and flexible, generous and humorous and it also very important to see how do they relate their nieghbours, working situations, to relatives and how their relationship with older generations also valuable. Besides, one respondent add something more:

We try to see how they are as a couple do they see the differences, are differences allowed in their home between couple and the children. And other thing is important about their attachment. So we also try to see how they are attached both with the children but also with their parents, do they have good role models.

### **5.2.2 Matching with a child**

All the respondents observe that it is a matching process between the child's needs and the foster family's capacities when they try to place a child in a family. They usually consider the age of the child, which child would be fit for which family for example if the family has 15+ children the social worker would not place an infant in that family but they might be very good with teenagers and they also ask the families which child need them. They also try to match the background of the child and the potential foster family. Besides, they try to meet the child's special need also. One social worker says like this:

We try to see into families how much they are able to meet the child's special needs. For example, many children did not have their present father and it is important to be in a foster family that the man could be a good role model.

### **5.2.3 Single parent**

All the respondents agree that they have single parent foster family but the number is not so high. Among them the single mother family is comparatively common and most of the respondent said they do not place a youngest child in that family but for the teenagers it is not so uncommon. The single father family is very rare and they do not place any girl in that family rather a boy and three respondents said they choose this foster home due to their (foster homes) special professional background and previous orientation of the child. One of them says:

We have now one single father family and he was a father of a friend of this child who has placed there. That's why the boy wanted to live with this man. But of course we interviewed him and discussed with him as we do with other families.

Most of them comment the single parent foster family concept was not some years ago but now it is kind of adjustment with the society, because society changed and families look in another way today that they did before and they are trying to follow in that way. Two respondents say even now-a-days the question also rose about the homosexual families and they think it is just a matter of time to adapt them in this field.

### **5.2.4 Foster carers' educational background**

The educational background of foster family it is not a crucial part because if you have a higher degree it does not mean that you are a good foster parent. It is more important that you have trained to take care of children. They say most of their foster families where they have not much educational background; they have quite few with academic background. Though, they try to match the child's special needs to the family's education. One social worker says in this context:

Sometimes we need families with special knowledge. Sometimes we have child, who has special problems and then we look for someone, for example a woman who has experience in nursing or such things and then we recruit her. But it is not common, only for special cases when we need.

### **5.2.5 Foster carers' education or training**

Again in considering the different nature of working area the respondents reply in different ways about this question. Two respondents who selected from the two units in the biggest foster care units say when they have been investigated the potential foster families they notify one of the social workers of child care project who is responsible for the training. Every semester they have three or four training groups of foster parents. Then the social worker (from child care project) and one of them or from other unit train them. The two respondents selected from the two separately working units say they train their foster families by themselves.

All of them say they have the basic training and it is about eight times (usually for three hours) and they go through different parts; what does it mean, what does the law say, how is the social system and what does it mean for a child to be separated from their parents, the importance of the child meets to the biological parents and a lot of different areas. So this is a sort of preparation for the assignment. Two of them say during this training they also include some parts from the PRIDE training and in one session of this training they select one child who has been a foster child s/he come and share his/her experience as a foster child also they have an experienced foster parent to come and tell this new comers how it could be.

All of them say then they have different lectures. They may also go way for the weekend and one person come and have a lecture for a couple of hours and then talks. Two respondents selected from the two separately working units say they also try to find lectures for the specific family what is their need (for example HIV Aids or sexuality etc.). The foster family responds:

Yes, we met maybe it is 8 or 10 times and it was different things such as how about small child, what kind of problems these children could have, how their surrounding will looks upon as foster care takers, what about law, about different problems that could occur during the time of foster care. Then also one session was an ex-foster family shares their experience about fostering and we also ask them different questions.

#### **5.2.6 Theoretical base**

All of the respondents who assess the foster family say they use system theory and attachment theory (one mentioned Bowlby's attachment theory), one of them says they use the psychodynamic theory and also they use cognition theory and crisis theory too. And most of them say it is not a single theory, rather they have an eclectic perspective. Another one says in the practice they use and try to apply most the system theory (family system theory). The other one says when they interview the foster family they talk about the system theory how the system parts affect to each other, how they can affect another system part etc. One social worker quotes in this context:

Of course the systems theory is the main basis, we see things as a system, and I mean if there is a child we could have been a foster home there is another system but it is also the biological system and it needs these two systems to work and work with us, so there are three different systems.

#### **5.2.7 Foster carers' employment and adjustment with this assignment**

All of the respondents says in a word yes, most of the foster family both men and women have their ordinary job. One respondent says we have a few families that have an assignment for full-time what can be called are 'emergency families'. They will be prepared to take a child, but they have their ordinary job. But all of them say when they place a child into one family they have to find solutions according to the child's needs. If they place a small child in the family someone has to be at home with the child for a certain period of time, maybe for six months or sometimes maybe up to a year and they pay their salary what they lost (though it has a limit as mentioned earlier). Then some

maybe they can still work but they have to reduce their working hours and the social authorities pay their lost income. The foster family says they adjust their time with the foster child in the same way and they also maintain a lot of plan to fix everything. It has been discussed the foster family's views about the money in the section of foster care as an assignment (5.1.1).

### **5.2.8 Foster children's placement and others**

All the respondents say they do not place the child close to their parents place and also say it could be not always best for the child to place them near to their parents. But they try to have such a general rule that it should be accessible for the parents, and sometimes it could be physically longer distance but it should be possible to get their about hundred kilometers away from Gothenburg. Then they have some exceptions also for example sometimes children who are placed with their relatives it could be further away. And then also in some exceptional cases they need to have the longer distance.

All respondents say they usually place one child in one family but if they are sibling then they try to place them in the same place. It is the most common thing. But it may be three; also up to four. One respondent say there are two borders in between usual and unusual

All the respondents say usually the foster parents are older (not always) than the child's natural parents. Two of them say they have some network families they might not necessarily be older. Most of them say the foster families' age between 30 and 50. One respondent comment on this:

Usually the foster parents are older than the biological parent because some have children who have moved out and this is you know a way of prolonging the parenthood.

### **Analysis and Interpretation (Theme 5.2)**

This theme is mostly related to the attachment theory and the notion of "secure base" concept. When the social workers recruited foster family (in most cases) they prefer an ordinary family that suits with the nuclear family and also it is connected to the notions of "good parenthood". It is a model family that shows the child how a normal or ordinary family functions. It is interesting to note that, though, they are recruiting single parent foster family recently, they do not place youngest children in those families. According to the attachment theory, the infant needs to begin to understand how the social world works, the difference between mums and dads, sisters and grandmothers, family and strangers. Each person will represent different sources of safety or anxiety, fun or uncertainty (Schofield and Beek, 2006: 13). Over the time and in the context of sensitive caregiving the infant learn to trust, to wait for needs to be satisfied. It is also explained by Winnicott's notion of 'the good enough mother'. Here "good enough" means caregiving that is reliable and available (Ibid).

It is also related to the social worker's *suitable matching* process. In general they try to find out the family members (parent and children) attachment, they try to find out them as

a *role model* and also try to match the both sides' needs, especially for the children, who are appropriate to meet the specific needs to a specific child. According to the attachment theory a successful family placement, the child's past is taken into account, thought about and understood in order to accurately target the sensitive, available and responsive relationship experiences which can bring about change (Ibid, p.11).

In the practical field, the study has found foster carers usually take leave from job and engage for taking care of children, because child's needs for parents staying at home. So, this is a question, why they take leave? I think this is because of their parenthood and it is obviously related to the attachment concept. I also think the recent trend to recruit single parent foster family (and the question about homosexual foster family), all of these things very much related to the notions of parenthood, motherhood, fatherhood and as a whole attachment.

### **5.3 Pre-requisites to make fostering attractive**

#### **5.3.1 Difficulties to find new foster homes**

All of the respondents say they need more foster families but they are facing difficulties to recruit them. One respondent says they need to have a lot of families to choose between not just one family who is fit, but a lot of families and that's why they work only for recruitment. The respondent also says it is not difficult only here in Gothenburg but in Sweden as a whole. Another respondent says they have a policy that if the child needs a placement they have to find a foster home, not an institution, because institutions are not good for the child and its cost a lot of money. So they need to recruit more foster homes.

Most of them say they do not think the payment is the reason of difficulties. They think now-a-days most families are into so many things; they do not have this additional space mentally and time also to help a child who needs so much attention and time. One respondent comments like this:

To be a foster family it is a very big step for a family, it is much more than ordinary work. It is I mean you can compare with in a way to decide to get another child of your own.

#### **5.3.2 Opposition of modern family policy**

Three of the respondents say they think the existing foster care system is opposite to the modern family policy, because today most of the families both parents are working and if they need to do it that is why they do not have possibility to say yes. Two of them say foster families are not the modern families; they are like typical type of family. So many people feel that they want to do something for other children and maybe there is a will. One respondent says like this:

There are other people who are not focused at their job, at their career and they want to take another way of life, not just focus on career but also want to focus on family. So if you look at in Sweden who becomes foster family they are not the career people and they work part time. They also do not have higher education and they mostly work with the people, like care taking work.



### **5.3.3 Criteria of recruiting new/younger carers**

In this question different respondent responds very differently. One replies “I do not know” and another one says “we think only how we recruit more foster home but we do not discuss about the assignment”. One respondent say money is not the main thing but by raising it and give it another status maybe that could be one way and also say the social workers give in these families as much support they need and try to encourage them, giving them the feeling that they have a back-up that is really supportive.

Another respondent says we always hope to want to recruit new/younger foster family but they are 50+, they have adult children so they are able to do it. We advertise in the TV, magazine we also campaign together with four units but do not find a single foster family, but lots of contact families. We also advertise in the union magazine because it spreads all over in Sweden they did it in the job section and put full-time payment offer, and they got a lot of phone calls from many people. Now-a-days it is like a job but it is not a job maybe after 15 years it maybe considers an employment, who knows. Foster family would be taken it in their own way to consider it an employment. The respondent also says “I do not know how to recruit younger carers”. But I think when they start a family they are interested to get more children. Maybe it could be more attractive for them if it consider as a full-employment. But maybe they want to take easy assignment not difficult assignment.

The other one say I think information, knowledge and change of attitude is very essential questions. We need to talk about this issue in the whole society. I also think it can be start from the school because I think in school at least one child in every class who is a foster child in Sweden and they are very much silence and shame and they do not talk about it. So we need to find a way to talk about it and take more responsibility for those children and families in broader aspect.

### **5.3.4 Politicians and authorities responsibility**

Three respondents say “I do not know” and only two of them reply this question. One respondent says they did not think about that, and also says the social workers need first think about it and then may be other authorities. But another respondent strongly says yes, I think they need to take responsibility if they want to get new foster homes. The respondent also says in Norway they work in a very different way they have much more government responsibility for this and they have national campaigns and information and so on. They spend a lot of efforts and money and everything for getting new families.

### **5.3.5 What could be attractive to younger carers for fostering**

Two respondents say they do not know but another three, one of them says when a young couple start a family they are interested to get more children. Maybe it could be more attractive for them if it is considered as a full employment. But maybe they want to take

an easy assignment not a difficult assignment. Another one say maybe more appreciation for what they are doing in terms of better payment maybe an important issue. And the third one say I think younger family carers would be attracted to get more support, more education and to have more information. I do not think money is the important thing for them, I think they want to do something good for the society and they need to know how they will do something good and who will support them. They wanted to have support from the social authorities to have guidance and to have possibility to attend support groups and to have opportunity to meet other families who work with the same thing and to be a part of a team. They do not want to work alone. In this context the foster family says more information about the assignment is very important. They also say:

It is very important to the foster families to try to treat them I mean as long as they have these children and there is like a room, so we should try to treat them like as a normal family.

### **5.3.6 Foster care considers as full-employment**

Most of them reply they are not sure about that. One respondent says money is important but it is not main and only thing so I doubt that. Another one says not necessarily but in some difficult cases (teen-agers) it may be consider as a job or employment but not for small children because they need a family. They need more attachment like a family member. So it may be consider as a full-time assignment not employment or job. Another two say if it considers as an employment there may be create some problems because in that time they will have other benefits like leave, holidays as an employed person. The foster family's opinion is the same. The other one says:

We discuss a lot about this issue among the social workers at this place and I think most of my colleagues think about it. I often think it can be a job not really job but perhaps they could be some kinds of compromise, more money but not the job or we try to find other ways.

### **Analysis and Interpretation (Theme 5.3)**

In Sweden social workers are facing difficulties to recruit more foster homes, but they need more because foster care is most used intervention instead of institution if out-of-home care is necessary. According to attachment theory a warm, consistent and reliable caregiving can change children's previous expectations both of close adults and of themselves (Schofield and Beek, 2006: 153). The intervention of foster carers, therefore, is of central importance. They try to take a parenting role for the child, especially become a *therapeutic* parent. According to Schofield and Beek (2006), if foster care is viewed as potentially *therapeutic* interventions for a child, we must think not only of the parenting approach but also of the *developmental benefit* that this approach is likely to have for the child. It provides for the child a secure base and I think Swedish professionals try to ensure secure base for those children who face problems due to disturbed attachment by placing them in foster care. It can be analyzed according to the systems theory as foster care is a system that functions by the different interdependent sub-system.

The main findings of this theme about the difficulties to find new foster homes are: it seems that the changing family patterns and also changing way of living of today's

people have an influence on recruiting foster homes. Besides, lack of taking initiative by the state, lack of appreciation and recognition of foster care; knowledge, information and support and payment (not much) has an impact on this which are recognized in Höjer's (2006) article. But it is different from Andersson's (2001) study (not about the motives but other things) that conducted some years ago, but supported by the conclusion of Regner, M. & Johansson, L. (2006). It can be explained as the results of changing society as a whole. These findings are also mostly similar with the Triseliotis, J. et al's (2000) and Sinclair, I. et al's (2004) study results that conducted on the recruitment and retention of foster carers.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Discussion and Conclusions**

This chapter presents the discussion about the main findings in relation to the research questions. The study has three research questions. The main focus of the study was to find out the social services recruitment policy of foster carers and how they practice it and also to explore some pre-requisites of foster carers' recruitment policy from the perspectives of Swedish professionals. For this, the study has analyzed and explored some selected social workers' views who are working in this field. The results are summarized and discussed here.

In Sweden, foster care is considered as an assignment, it is not an employment. Foster carers get a certain fee for their assignment and that fee is taxable and pensionable (not like as employed person) and they also get money for the costs of the child based on their age. But if the child needs more time and care then it is increased. They do not get any other benefits. Foster carers are recruited by the guideline of Swedish law, the Social Services Act and the Care of Young Persons Act. According to the law foster carers can be within the Childs' network or outside the networks and it is related to the best interest of the child and to be a foster home they both have to be investigated.

Foster carers are recruited via advertisement or by the existing foster carers' personal network. Social workers assess the potential foster carers by using the interview which is based on a method elaborated by Kälvesten (Kälvesten & Meldahl: 1982). It is a method that has been used in Sweden for a long time but it has not been evaluated at any time. Though, it has been revised by the different foster care units in their own way. According to this interview social workers try to assess their three generations information as how they are stable as a family as well as a well-functioning family. They also investigate their different registers such as police, social and financial register. After completion all of these formalities, they get education or training for specific period of time and it is also a conventional method. Then they get a child.

To select the foster family social workers usually consider the ordinary family who has a stable relationship between husband and wife, who are flexible and who are mentally prepared to take care of another child. Foster carers' education is not considered as an important criterion. They try to place a child in a family to consider the both sides' needs, that is called matching and they always try to ensure the best interest of the child. Besides, recently they are recruiting single parent foster family (both male and female), though the number is not so high and single man family is very rare. It considers as a result of changing form of family patterns as well as the society. Social workers usually place one child in one family but if siblings they try to place in the same family. Sometimes the number can be up to four. The distance of foster homes also guided by the general rule and it will be 10 Swedish miles. Foster parents are usually older than the child's natural parents.

The social workers follow the different theoretical perspectives to assess the foster homes and practice it such as attachment theory, psychodynamic theory and systems theory mostly.

Most of the foster family both men and women have their ordinary job and when they start to foster a child they adjust their time by an alternative way. They usually take leave from their work and are compensated for their lost income by the social services. Sometimes it does not cover the whole amount of money that they have lost.

The study identifies that every municipality need more foster family and they are facing difficulties to recruit them. But it is not considered the reason of foster carers' different employment status, it rather emphasizes due the changing way of living of today's people. Though, existing foster care system identifies the opposition of modern family policy where both men and women are working and planning also their parenthood in that way and much focus on developing their career. But the foster family also identifies the different type of family, they are not modern family and they want to do something for other children not only want to focus on their career.

The requirements of recruiting younger carers seem a bit complicated to the professionals. They suggest in this context, money is not considered the main and important thing but one thing obviously. Besides, proper information, knowledge, change of attitude, more support, and more discussion about it in the whole society is needed, treat foster carers as part of a team and give foster care another status is identified. Politicians and authorities responsibilities regarding this are also identified. But in the question of foster care considers as full-employment, they replies, there are so many things (including money) related with this as an employment but those are not match with the nature of foster care. Though, the social workers discuss to consider the different way of implementation about this assignment, but they have no specific thinking.

At the end of the discussion and conclusions it can be said that the study has attempted to explore the answers of the research questions that were designed. The recruitment policy of foster carers in Sweden is guided by the law and it follows some specific criteria. The foster families' assessment criteria also specified by the law. But the main and only method for the assessment of foster family is old one and not evaluated any time formally by either professionals or researchers. The idea about the criteria of foster family is very much traditional. Though the changing form of society and family patterns already have affected in this field (single parent foster family) in some extent but that is not identified in other aspects of modern living. That's why the third research question has seemed a bit complicated to the professionals. Though, they also think about it and they have some suggestions. But I think it is very much related to the policy question if something needs to adjust both the modern society and foster care. It is also a big question and of course it is not concern of the professionals rather policy makers.

The findings of this study have explored some new ideas of thinking regarding this, though it is not generalizable. But it suggests some areas of thinking for better implementation of foster care in Sweden. Those are: Foster care can considers not

‘regular’ employment but needs to think about the another way of status to adjust foster carers working life and fostering assignment and in this context, payment could consider not the main or only thing but it is a thing; To increase the government responsibility for recruiting more foster homes and to provide proper information and knowledge, change of attitude about foster care, more appreciation and enough support by the authority and also to treat them as part of a working team. Finally it can be said, if we want to generalize, there needs a need to conduct further and broad area coverage research on this topic. In that context this study could be a valuable source for the researchers who are interested in this field.

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## **Appendix-A**

### **Interview Guide (For the social workers)**

#### **Background questions**

Could you tell me your educational background?  
Which year did you complete your graduation in social work?  
Do you have any special training on foster care?  
How many years have you been working with foster care?  
Do you have other experiences in social work?  
How many cases you are dealing now?  
How many social workers are working in foster care team in your district?

#### **Recruitment policy and method**

Could you tell me who the employer of foster carer is?  
Did they receive any benefit like other employed person?  
Do you have any specific policy to recruit foster carer?  
Did you follow any guideline to do this?  
Could you tell me the recruitment procedure of foster carer's?  
Do you have any specific method(s) to assess foster family?  
Did you evaluate this method(s) any time that it is working as good tools for assessing foster family?  
Could you tell me (if you have idea) all the foster care units of Gothenburg are using the same method(s) to recruit them?

#### **Characteristics of good foster home**

Could you tell me, what is a good foster home and how do you determine it?  
How do you perceive about a family would be good for a child to fostering?  
Do you have single parent foster family?  
Do you consider the educational qualification of foster carers?  
Do you have any provision for foster carers education or training?  
What theoretical base do you use for assessing good foster family?  
Is the placement of child always nearest to their parents place?  
How many children you usually placed in a family?  
Do you know foster parents are employed to another job?  
If they have job, how they can manage their responsibility to fostering children?  
Could you tell me what is the average age of foster parents?  
Are they usually older than the child's natural parents?

#### **Pre-requisites to make fostering attractive**

Do you need more foster family to provide children for fostering now-a-days?  
Did you face any difficulties to find suitable/new foster homes recently?

Do you think, fostering considers like semi-employment and this is the main reason to face difficulties to find new foster homes recently?

Do you think also it is the clear opposition of Modern Swedish family policy?

In considering this situation, what do you think about it and how to ensure to recruit new/younger carers?

Do you have any specific suggestions regarding this situation?

Could you tell me specifically, if you want to recruit new/younger carers what should do in this regard?

Do you think politicians can take responsibility regarding this situation?

Do you think social services could do more for foster carers to ensure child welfare?

According to your opinion, what could be attractive for younger carers for fostering?

Do you think if foster care considers as a full-employment like other job it would be more effective to run fostering as a means of child welfare.

Thank you very much for the interview. If you would like to add something you are welcome. Additionally would like to ask you permission to contact to you if some things I would like to clear during my degree report writing process and promising to deliver interview transcript as soon as it will be ready.

## **Appendix-B**

### **Interview Guide (For the Foster Family)**

#### **Background questions**

Could you tell me your date of birth?  
Could you tell me your educational background?  
How many years have you been working with foster care?  
How many children do you fostered till now?  
Who took initiative first for fostering, you or your partner/husband?  
Do you get cooperation from your partner/husband to do this?

#### **Main questions**

Do you think, it is your job or only assignment?  
How do you get this assignment at first?  
Social services recruited you or by another way?  
Did you face any interview to get this assignment?  
Did you get any education or training to do your assignment?  
Do you get any financial benefit for doing this?  
Do you think it is enough for your assignment?  
Are you satisfied with this?  
Do you have foster child now? How older she/he is?  
Do you have your own child? How many and how older they are?  
Are you engage with another job without this assignment?  
How do you manage your responsibility in your work place and with this child?  
Sometimes foster parents take leave from their employment and do fostering. Why do they prefer fostering?  
Do you have any expectations regarding this assignment from the authority or politicians?  
Could you tell me something, what could be attractive for younger carers to do this assignment?  
Could you tell me if fostering considers as a full-employment it would be attractive for many families to do fostering?  
Could you share with me something (if you have idea) about the feeling of other foster carers?  
What is positive with fostering?  
What is negative with fostering?  
Would you like to do it again?

Thank you very much for the interview.

## Appendix-C

### Informed Consent

The following is a presentation of how I will use the data collected in the interview.

The research project is a part of my education in the International Masters program in Social Work at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden. In order to insure that my project meets the ethical requirements for good research I promise to adhere to the following principles:

- Interviewees in the project will be given information about the purpose of the project.
- Interviewees have the right to decide whether he or she will participate in the project, even after the interview has been concluded.
- The collected data will be handled confidentially and will be kept in such a way that no unauthorized person can view or access it.

The interview will be recorded as this makes it easier for me to document what is said during the interview and also helps me in the continuing work with the project. In my analyze some data may be changed so that no interviewee will be recognized. After finishing the project the data will be destroyed. The data I collect will only be used in this project.

You have the right to decline answering any questions, or terminate the interview without giving an explanation.

You are welcome to contact me or my supervisor in case you have any questions (e-mail addresses below).

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